



Illinois Veteran News

An Update from the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs ★ March 2020

★ Director Welcome

It is my pleasure to share this newsletter from the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs (IDVA). At IDVA, our mission is simple but powerful: To empower veterans and their families to thrive.

We do this through our amazing field services team of veteran service officers, who are all veterans, who help our nation's heroes navigate the system of federal, state, and local benefits available to them; by providing long-term skilled health care in our veteran homes; and through programs and partnerships across the state to address various veterans issues. We are proud to serve the more than 650,000 veterans and military families in Illinois.

In this issue, we are excited to share new laws affecting veterans in Illinois and to introduce our new Assistant Director, Anthony Vaughn. Since February was Black History Month and March is Women's History Month, we wanted to highlight the contributions women and black veterans have made to our nation's armed forces.

Remember: We are here to serve you. If you or a veteran you know would like more information from us, please [fill out this web form to be contacted](#).



★ New Laws for Illinois Veterans and Families

There are new laws affecting veterans that you should know about.

The most significant is the new process to obtain a "Veteran" designation on your Illinois driver's license or ID card. In the past, you needed to visit IDVA to certify your DD214 before visiting your local DMV or Secretary of State office to apply for your license. Now you can bring an uncertified copy of your DD214 or any other form of military identification and receive the designation on the spot. The Secretary of State will contact us to verify your veteran status after the fact, eliminating the need for you to visit two offices.

Another change is that the Fort Sheridan Cemetery was transferred to the National Cemetery Administration. This means that [burial benefits for veterans](#) now apply for burials at Fort Sheridan. To schedule a burial, determine eligibility for burial benefits, or find out more information, visit the [National Cemetery Administration](#).

The US Veterans Administration [extended Agent Orange presumption to 'Blue Water Navy' veterans](#) who served offshore of the Republic of Vietnam between Jan. 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975. If you or a veteran you know would like to file a claim under the expanded Agent Orange presumption, please [fill out this web form to be contacted](#). Finally, a new law in Illinois enables military spouses to receive the same veteran discounts offered by private businesses that a veteran would receive.

Our mission at the IDVA is very simple. To serve those who have served. In doing so, we serve not only the men and women who have worn the uniform, but also their families. It is our privilege to be able to help our veterans receive the benefits they have earned through service to our nation. Our goal is to empower our veterans and their families to thrive in all aspects of their lives.

We know there are many veterans within our great state who do not require any assistance – but we still want to encourage you to "Stand Up and Be Counted!" by registering with your local VSO. In doing so, you're helping IDVA to do a better job of planning for services, seeking federal funding and understanding the needs of our veteran communities statewide. Click here to register.

We Thank you for your service and for your sacrifice and we at the IDVA look forward to offering our services to You.

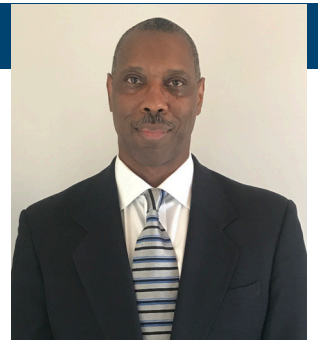
★ Meet Anthony Vaughn, IDVA's Assistant Director

Director Chapa LaVia was pleased to announce that Governor Pritzker has appointed Anthony Vaughn (MSgt – Ret.) to serve as Acting Assistant Director of the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

With fifteen years of service to the Department, Anthony has provided leadership as the Department's Manager of Field Services for the past four years. Anthony has also previously served in leadership roles as Appeals Division and Metro Division Supervisor. Anthony is a twenty-four-year veteran of the U.S. Marine Corp, holds a B.A. in Applied Behavioral Science from National Louis University and is an MBA Candidate with a Business Analytics concentration from Ohio University.

In his new role as Acting Assistant Director, Anthony will maintain direct supervision of the Field Services while a replacement is selected as well as take over supervision of other department operations.

Congratulations to Anthony in his new role! OORAH!

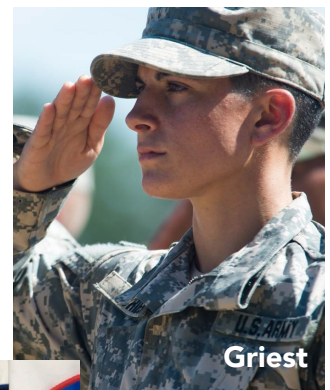
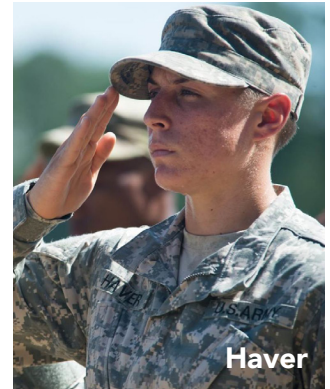


★ Saluting America's Women Veterans

During women's history month, the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs honored the contributions women have made to the US armed forces. Examples include:

1. **Shaye Haver and Kristen Griest**, the first women ever to graduate from the famously grueling Army Ranger school.
2. **Brigadier General Lorna Mahlock**, the first black woman to become a one-star general in the Marine Corps. She said, "If something small that I do helps or makes a difference, tell me what it is and I'll do more of it."
3. **US Army Specialist Lori Piestewa**, the first Native American woman in history to die in combat and the first US woman killed in the Iraq War.
4. **Ensign Janie Mines**: "They called me the double insult because I was both black and a female." Despite discrimination and harassment, she was the first black woman to graduate from the US Naval Academy.
5. **Air Force General Lori Jean Robinson**, who became the highest-ranking woman in United States military history when she served as Commander of United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM).

And many, many more women veterans who fought for equality and fired their shots at the glass ceiling in our armed forces.



★ Saluting America's Black Veterans

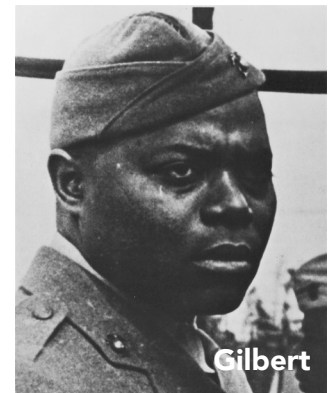
During Black history month, the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs honored the contributions black Americans have made to the US armed forces. Examples include:

1. **Cathay Williams**, the first African American woman to enlist in the US Army and the only known female Buffalo Soldier.
2. **Sergeant Major Gilbert "Hashmark" Johnson**, a WWII and Korean War veteran, one of the first black Marines, and one of the first black drill instructors in the Marine Corps. He led 25 combat patrols in WWII and served our nation for 32 years. "I was a stern instructor," he said, "but I was fair."
3. **Sgt. William H. Carney**. He escaped slavery through the Underground Railroad and became the first African American Medal of Honor recipient for courageously saving the regimental colors during the Battle of Fort Wagner. He said, "Boys, I only did my duty; the old flag never touched the ground!"
4. **2nd Lt. Henry Ossian Flipper**, a former slave who overcame harassment, isolation, and abuse to become the first black man to graduate from West Point.
5. **Admiral Michelle Howard**, the first black woman to command a Navy ship, first black woman to achieve two- and three-star rank, and first female graduate of the US Naval Academy selected for flag rank.

And many, many more black veterans who helped blaze the trail and fight racism in the US military.



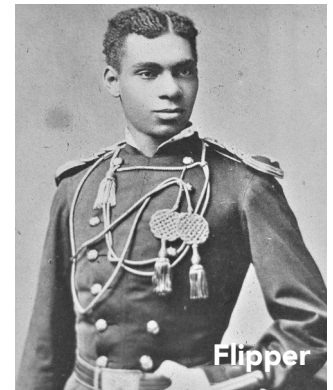
Williams



Gilbert



Carney



Flipper



Howard

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**As ever, thank you for reading,
and thank you for your service!**



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